

U.S. Department of Agriculture Publishes Catfish 2003 Reports

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) released the first and second descriptive reports for its Catfish 2003 study. *Copies of Part I: Reference of Fingerling Catfish Health and Production Practices in the United States, 2003* and *Part II: Reference of Foodsize Catfish Health and Production Practices in the United States, 2003* have been shipped to producers and other industry members across the country.

NAHMS conducted its first national study of the catfish industry with the Catfish '97 study. Like Catfish '97, Catfish 2003 is designed to provide both participants and the industry with valuable information on health and management practices on U.S. catfish operations.

Four states participated in Catfish 2003: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. These states represent the nation's major catfish-producing states, accounting for: 73.4 percent of all U.S. catfish operations on Jan. 1, 2003; 95.5 percent of the total national catfish sales in 2002; and 95.5 percent of the water surface acres to be used for catfish production from Jan. 1 through June 30, 2003. There were 739 respondents to the Catfish 2003 questionnaire in the four participating states: (Alabama 223, Arkansas 157, Louisiana 67, Mississippi 292) with an overall response rate of 79.0 percent.

Here are a few highlights from Parts I and II of the Catfish 2003 study:

- The majority of broodstock (57.8 percent) was 3 to 4 years old. However, a substantial percentage (21.1 percent) was 5 to 6 years old.
- Approximately one in six catfish broodstock (16.3 percent) was culled in 2002, relative to the Jan. 1, 2003, inventory.
- Nearly 15 percent of broodstock were lost to disease, predation, or other problems.
- Overall, almost 80 percent of eggs brought into hatcheries survived to hatching. The percentage of all eggs typically surviving to hatching did not differ significantly between small and large hatcheries.
- Slightly over 20 percent of operations with between 20 and 149 surface acres used

automated sensors for monitoring dissolved oxygen. A higher percentage of the largest operations tended to rely on hand monitors. Dissolved oxygen was not monitored regularly by 39.0 percent of operations with 1 to 19 surface acres.

- Off-flavor problems occurred on 69.6 percent of operations, and harvest was delayed because of off-flavor in 53.3 percent of ponds. A minimum delay in harvest of at least 7 days was reported by most (91.8 percent) operations.
- The average size of foodsize fish operations was 205.6 surface acres with an average of 18.8 ponds. Average pond size was 11.0 surface acres.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Access the APHIS home page by pointing your Web browser to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and clicking on the "News" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Teresa Howes (970) 494-7410 or teresa.k.howes@aphis.usda.gov

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